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ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

JUDGE ARTHUR MAC ARTHUR,

AT THE

NINTH ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT,

OF THE

WASHINGTON NORMAL SCHOOL,

For the District of Columbia,

JUNE 9, 1882.



WASHINGTON :
1882.

ADDRESS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :

These young ladies have completed the course of studies prescribed in the Washington Normal School, and are entitled to receive the certificate awarded to all those who have passed the test of a satisfactory examination. They have been specially trained in the science of teaching, and will find employment at once to instruct the various grades in the public schools of the District. We have assembled this evening to honor their diligence, to witness the delivery of their certificates, and to bid them God-speed in the highly useful career to which they have devoted so much of their future life.

The Normal School is a revolution in the science of pedagogies. It is the revolution of our century. The art by which the teacher himself is taught successfully the principles and rules which pertain to the instruction of the young, is a new thing and one of the most important innovations upon the old regime of primary education. Under a very modest name we have a grand and fruitful institution for the professional training in the theory and practice of school education. A baker or a shoemaker had to learn his trade by an apprenticeship of several years before he could practice it ; but no preparation was expected of the schoolmaster. He entered the schoolroom relying upon main strength and a good birch rod to carry him through the stern struggle of experience. I remember the unique type of the ancient pedagogue well. He used to give me a dose of physical education most every day. and I can assure you it made a most unfavorable impression upon me. It improved neither my temper nor my mind.

We can recall the graphic description of the school-

master in *Old Mortality*, by Sir Walter Scott, who stunned with the noise and suffocated with the closeness of his schoolroom, has spent the whole day in controlling petulance, exciting indifference to action, striving to enlighten stupidity, and laboring to soften obstinacy; and whose very powers of intellect have been confounded by hearing the same dull lesson repeated a hundred times by rote, and only varied by the various blunders of the reciters.

This is changed. The unique pedagogue with his errors and his punishments, however picturesque as an object of the imagination, has passed away, and the rote system is buried in the same grave with him who taught it. Peace to their ashes! And the dogmatic mode of teaching is rapidly falling into disuse. Instead of drilling the pupils in abstract rules, which were not understood, every process of imparting information is now addressed to the understanding. Instead of the rote system, that of Ollendorff, which teaches a foreign language by the steps through which children pick up their own, has been advantageously resorted to. I am not familiar with what is going on in our schools, as I have no opportunity of visiting them; but I understand the pupils are not required so much to commit rules to memory. For instance, in studying mathematics the powers and relations of numbers are investigated, from which mere rules result. Even the multiplication table, a conundrum upon which I was not very sound, has given way to the method of repeated additions to form a product; and abstract propositions in elementary geometry have been superseded by examples or object lessons which embrace an observation of the reality of things.

It not unfrequently occurs that the definitions a child has been taught to repeat with the utmost precision have no meaning to his reason until he ascertains what are the relations of real things in after life. A school boy

was asked to state the names of the four seasons, to which he replied: "Pepper, mustard, whiskey and tomato catsup." The question did not fall within the definition of his lesson upon the changes in the year, and he answered according to the articles with which he *seasoned* his food at home.

What impressions, for instance, used to be more hazy and vague than those conveyed to the pupil's mind by geographical facts. He could define estuaries and islands, and isthmuses and the height of mountains; but his conclusions were all at sea. His thinking powers were never called into exercise. An English gentleman travelling on horseback in the country, was accosted by a boy, who offered to tell him all the capitals in Europe for a penny. When he had done, the gentleman replied: "Here's your penny; and I will give you another if you will tell me whether they are animals or vegetables." "Animals," replied the boy promptly. It was not until quite lately that a model of the earth's surface was introduced large enough to compare its different features in tangible, palpable proportions, a mere look at which will convey more accurate information than was acquired by years of study under the exploded systems of my school-days. Indeed there are many intelligences more practiced than a child's to which an exhibition of miniature cliffs and forests, cataracts and mountain ranges, of zones and lofty peaks, would convey delightful conceptions.

The same improvement in the practice of teaching grammar is observable. The system of learning a series of incomprehensible rules and definitions is not forced upon the pupil until, in some measure, the study will coincide with the expansion of his mind. Unless quite above the average intelligence of a child he was sure to stick fast in the conjugation of the verb, and to puzzle himself into disgust at the distinction between a participle and an

adjective ; and when he got entangled among the conjunctions, adverbs and prepositions, he mixed them up like the little children in Pinafore. The parts of speech were often taught before the student could understand the meaning of words, and he was required to parse before he was able to master the interpretation of the sentence. The vices of the forcing or rote system were more irrational in this than, perhaps, in any branch of instruction. The study is now, I hope, conducted more in relation to the condition of the pupil's mind; that is, gradually, until it can be taken into the confidence as well as the intelligence of the child; or at least postponed until he can understand it; for it is eternally true, that education is alone easy and efficient by conforming to the simple conditions of the intellect. Indeed, the mind of the child was treated very much like its body. Not many years ago it was the established practice to pour so nauseating a compound down a child's throat the instant it came upon earth, that one might suppose it would never get rid of the taste until it went out of the world again. The mother who first discarded the armour of swaddling clothes for her babe, was suspected of meditating infanticide. So similarly, when old enough to attend school, the mind was stuffed with rules until it recoiled from the prolonged monotony of the rote system lessons which it did not and could not comprehend. The propulsion of thought has now taken a more just and rational direction.

A child a dozen years old remembers the rules which are taught him, and although he may not comprehend them, the mere committing them to memory is a conquest in which he takes some pride. Two or three years later his mind grows weary of mere formula and requires something more attractive. He becomes interested in things, in ideas and sentiments. But teaching remained perfectly indifferent to all these glowing transformations of the mind. Instruction continued to be addressed to the

memory instead of the intelligence. Normal teaching recognizes the slow preparations by which mental perceptions are formed in children, and changes its programme to secure their attention, to excite their curiosity and to inform and expand all the manifestations of the mind in passing through the different grades of public instruction.

The education of our girls was still worse than that of the boys, and was carried on by an extravagant want of common sense; especially in what were called fashionable boarding schools. Many a fair and lovely girl has fallen a victim to the ignorance and pride of her parents, who deprived their daughters of youthful sports that they might grow up with a fragile, delicate exterior; and teachers have kept them sitting when they ought to have been playing, that they might acquire ladylike tastes and flat chests. The boy who carries off the prizes at the English universities and in our colleges, frequently excel in handling an oar or a bat, or in some other out-door exercise. Nothing of the kind accompanied the mental training of a girl at a fashionable boarding school. She was simply regarded as a mind into which were to be poured so much knowledge in French, music, embroidery, &c., and the elasticity of nature was subdued, that she might have deportment and ladylike manners. The sound mind in a sound body was to all intents ignored in her case. In ninety-nine cases in a hundred the tendency to spinal distortion was given when the girl was under the discipline of a school for young ladies.

It was perfectly natural that young ladies thus educated to be attractive instead of useful should occupy with their toilet all those hours which are worth far more than gold, in adorning that part of the head which we call the outside, instead of the interior; and that many of the habits of their after life should become strange and unnatural. We can credit the story of a certain countess who replied to a friend that she thanked heaven for suf-

ficient fortitude to keep her griefs pent up in her own bosom. "But alas," she exclaimed, "Fido died a month ago, and yesterday morning as the clock struck two Adonis expired in my arms." Now, Fido was a shock coated poodle full of fleas, and Adonis, when he graced the earth, a mangy little pug dog. But what was still more unnatural; the twin children of the countess were at a country seat of the family, and at the breast of a wet nurse. The mother had not seen them for six weeks. Although they were not lapdogs, let us at least hope they were baptized. In fact, this lapdog and poodle fantasie throws in the shade the sacred Ox Apis of the Egyptians, or the hallowed Cygnets of the Ganges. When a noble mother hugs closer to her bosom a puppy than she does her own babe, the wild Menomines who reckon the wolves as their consins; and the naked Delawares, who believed a beaver to have been their grandfather, appear less irreligious than such a christian woman in robes of state with a coronet on her brow. Of the same character was the young lady in a sealskin sacque who was telling how fond she was of reading novels, and upon being asked if she had read "Ten Thousand a Year," replied: "Oh, la, I never read so many as that in all my life." She was probably a sister to the young gentleman in a stove-pipe hat and an Ulster overcoat, dangling to his heels, who when expatiating on his love of poetry, upon being asked his opinion of Byron's Childe Harold, declared that he never knew Byron had a child by that name.

The other sex were no better. Indeed, if anything, they were more indifferent. Mr. Herbert Spencer writes: "Consider the facts, and it will seem strange that, while the raising of first rate bullocks is an occupation on which men of education willingly bestow much time, inquiry and thought, the bringing up of fine human beings is an occupation tacitly voted unworthy of their attention." These observations are as applicable here as in England.

Among our affluent farmers you will find that they visit their barns and pigstyes, but never enter the nursery of their children to regulate its exercises or ventilation. What an absurdity! that while the father is cudgeling his brains over a prize essay upon the best food for his inferior animals, and the mother is, perhaps, playing the Alpine Chorus on a grand Steinway piano, the inheritors of their fortune and their lineaments are turned over to some one—it may be a nurse with a mouthful of decayed teeth, or perhaps a boarding school still more ignorant than themselves of what is due to the rising generation. This is all wrong; and Moliere's satire on the doctors who felt their patient's pulses with the handles of their canes, ridicules a practice, which, when compared with such treatment of children, seems reasonable and logical.

Perhaps the reform method of teaching is more particularly exhibited in its effort to impart information upon subjects which bear most vitally upon our personal welfare. It is a view expressed by Dr. Richardson that women are particularly fitted for the purposes of sanitary education; and he declares that the training for the proper performance of this function is really very simple; and that they can make themselves acquainted with the leading physiological facts bearing upon the proper treatment of the body during the educational period of life. All teachers and parents are deeply interested in knowledge of this kind, and no system of normal instruction can be considered equal to the requirements of the age unless it affords sound knowledge of the general construction of the body, and of the physical laws upon which health depends.

As we now view education, it is the process by which the capabilities of the human mind are led forth into the general sphere of activity. We regard it as the method by which the original endowment of thought is enlarged and more highly intellectualized by advancement in

knowledge. It is therefore designed for the highest elevation of sentient beings. It should draw forth the faculties, training them intelligently, enriching them not only by an intercommunication of ideas, but by acquisitions which will be useful in all the circumstances of a busy life. This is a mighty task. It is an awakening of the mind. It requires something beyond mere dictation, something beyond a text book. Surely, if there is one profession more than another that requires a special preparation, it is that of the teacher. A little knowledge in chemistry may be dangerous in a physician when his patients suffer from it ; and a little knowledge in mineralogy may be bad for a man who loses a fortune by useless experiments in excavating the earth for its metallic ores ; and in such cases we promptly acknowledge the necessity for a perfect professional training in those who practice them. There seems to be no reason why the same rule does not apply still more superlatively to that of teaching. It is not only to know science, but how best to teach it to others. If the physician had been better taught his patient would not have suffered. If the mineralogist had been properly instructed his employer might have made a fortune instead of losing one. A general knowledge of science is admirable, but in order to render it effective there must be engrafted on it a special knowledge in some particular science. Hence we have the astronomer, the chemist, the artist, the engineer, and the machinist. So the teacher must not only have a just intelligence of things, but he should be trained in the best methods which experience has developed. It is strange that in a calling which requires an accurate knowledge of all the studies embraced in our modern system of education—a knowledge at once accurate and extensive, and which also demands the exercise of qualities that are esteemed the best of our nature ; that is to say, a just and even temper,

a clear mind, constant sagacity, the sentiment of kindness, the utmost delicacy of taste and judgment, an endless patience and a physical strength and endurance, which would have made the teacher a valiant soldier ; I say it is strange that a profession which required for its successful practice so many and diverse qualities, should never have been deemed one of those which required a most diligent and careful preparation for its exercise.

The Normal School is founded expressly to meet this exigency, and to maintain the highest intellectual level of the studies in our public schools. It has acquitted itself admirably of this task. Here the professors do not content themselves with giving instructions in matters of science, but the pupils are placed in the presence and at the head of a school improvised for the purpose, and they are taught in its management, and especially to comprehend the actual work of teaching experimentally. They become masters of the work, and acquire a taste for it, and a habit of imparting knowledge to others in the best art of teaching. In a word, they take the part of the teacher, and they have around them their fellow-pupils, who in their turn, each, assumes the role of teacher also. The old regime was teaching *ex cathedra*. The word of the master was all that was known. It was the beginning and the end of all learning. But Normal teaching reverses all this. It is the teacher himself who must be taught. His superiority makes him independent of mere routine, and he can perform his work with the ease and efficiency which always come from knowing how. Every lesson is a recreation. The pupils learn a great deal outside of the recitation. Like the traveller who tells of the distant seas and promontories he has passed, the strange lands and barbarous tribes he has visited, and the mighty cities filled with the works of art ; so the pupil under Normal instruction picks up a great deal of all sorts of knowledge as he passes along the course of study.

The elements of etymology, of history, grammar, botany, and on all the subjects related to his lessons. We learn more sometimes as we go along a road than we do at its end.

The Normal school exists only for the elite among the scholars of the Girls' High School scrupulously selected upon impartial examination. They have, therefore, given evidence of ability and industry which indicate not only what they have accomplished, but that they are capable of still greater efforts before they are introduced into the body of our public instructors. The institution exists. The *elan* is given to it. It has commenced to produce its fruits, and we are here to-night with flowers and smiles and other flattering testimonials of the favor in which it is held by the public. It ought to be perfected and extended to both sexes, for it goes to the very foundation of the school system itself. The reform which imposed the necessity for its creation, is more manifest than ever. It is now fully organised, admirably disciplined and sustained by the ardent sympathies of every friend of the public school. No sensible man, I think, would arrest its progress, for nothing could be more fatal to the studies required by the present condition of society. It is evident that a better system of teaching is now required than when reading, writing and cyphering constituted a popular education, and when the schoolmaster boarded round the neighborhood to eke out his miserable stipend. This answered the condition of the people. They dressed their bodies in homespun, but now they wear the finest fabrics. Why not improve the dress of the mind as well as that of the body? The change which time has brought into the habits of life infuses a corresponding change in the methods of instruction. The development of discovery, science and invention within the last fifty years, has prodigiously enlarged our knowledge, and it will not answer the necessities of modern life to learn only what

was taught when there was less knowledge and less invention in the world. The science which teaches the arts that produce and sustain our material prosperity, cannot, under this change of circumstances, be of more importance than the cultivation of the mind, the love of study and the diffusion of knowledge ; for upon these depend the inappreciable blessings of social life and civilized humanity. Our children, by-and-by, will be the men and women of society, with the world before them and every controlling agency withdrawn from their conduct. Their welfare must, consequently, depend upon the knowledge and self-control they acquire during the educational period of life. An overwhelming proportion of them will have to depend upon the public school for their education. From that school most of them will take away the intellectual baggage which they will carry with them through life. There is here no aim to make them professional scholars, but to give them enough information as will prepare them for the useful duties of life, and to rouse them to thinking, and to generate in their mind a swarm of ideas, which will become fixed by experience, as bees which try, but do not know where first to place their hive, but always end by yielding their tawny-colored honey.

Indeed, the public school reaches to the foundations of the Republic. It presents to our eyes a melange of ages and conditions of sexes and tastes. The sons and daughters of the merchant, of the mechanic, of the professional man, of the laborer, and the officeholder, stand here upon the level of the same instruction. You behold the rich and the poor—the latter not less assiduous nor less eager to learn than those of better fortune—they are all pupils by the same title, that of the people's children. There is no sweeter sight under the blue arch of heaven. An education common to them all, teaches the great lesson of the same right, and gratifies the spirit of equality which is

the most violent passion of our nature. Think of the millions of children subjected to this discipline, and who are here preparing for the active spheres of industrial and scientific pursuits which will hereafter employ their energies, and tell me whether the Republic which is the triumph of liberal ideas ought not necessarily to give the greatest force to the principle of the best education for those who shall, after the period of adolescence, control the administration of its public affairs, and select those who shall ordain and execute its laws?

The leading authors on educational matters agree in declaring that women have a natural aptitude for teaching. They bring into this work a grace, a buoyancy, and *finesse* that men do not always possess. Man is man and woman is woman, thank heaven that cannot be wiped out; and every man of any decency will at least admit equality in the difference, and the high social function to which *par excellence* woman is called, and where she can work without a rival, is now brought into the work of teaching, and it is the grandest reform in education, both morally and socially that has ever been put into practice. It is of interest to the whole human family. Because it brings one-half of the race into the work of teaching for the elevation of the whole. Who can understand better than women the way to approach children? Who can so well understand the temperaments so varied and so multiplied as those of youthful intelligence? She is a born teacher. She has the instinct of education. Look at her as a daughter, as a sister, as a wife, as a mother, and behold how attractive and sweet her influence, how incessant her abnegation, her self-sacrifice and devotion. Her sympathy captivates the love and confidence of a child, and she controls him without an effort, or at least by an effort that is persuasive rather than forcible. Rich in resources, ingenious in invention, she possesses every means of varying her action to all the springs and phases of the plastic soul of

the young. What she does not know, and perhaps cannot learn, she divines as if by inspiration. A child never wearies with a woman, because the woman never wearies with the child. All hail to our sisters! Welcome, thrice welcome to this beautiful field of labor for which you are fitted by nature, and require less preparation than your brothers.

If it be true that the interests of the country, and the welfare of mankind depend in a great measure on early impressions, and on a proper direction to be given to the mind of the young, I do not see why woman may not enter upon the work of education as a calling which agrees so peculiarly with her qualities and with her character and tastes. The training required for the proper performance of this function is provided for in the Normal School whose commencement we are celebrating. The object of the institution is the systematic training of young women in the practice and art of teaching; with a view of qualifying them to impart to others a good and careful education. This noble institution is another step concerning the liberal education of women. There is now a marked tendency in public opinion in favor of their admission to every educational advantage enjoyed by the other sex. In England colleges have been established for girls with college courses of study identically the same as those pursued by young men. The great universities of Oxford and Cambridge have provided for university education of women; and the London University makes no distinction in sex in bestowing its degrees. Many of our own colleges are taking the same course by admitting women on the same footing and to the same studies and classes. Of the twenty-six colleges in Illinois all but six admit young women on the same terms as young men. And there are many other schools of art, and of special science where both sexes are admitted without any other discrimination except qualification and capacity. This is

one of the profoundest movements in the social life of this day. If woman's ambition is not always of the most masculine order, her industry and aptness for study can no longer be denied. New motives for self-culture and a higher ideal of work and duty have been developed by these opportunities for acquiring knowledge, and every lady student deserves the individual charm which is conferred by the fate-imposed discipline of self-cultivation, of self-denial ; and she has found the truth of Goethe's exclamation, "he who has not wet his bread with tears, knows not the Gods." When properly educated, woman carries into every sphere of life—the domestic circle, the schoolroom or the social gathering—better views, higher tastes, nobler aspirations and deeper sympathies, she has a sweeter influence for truth, and a greater power for good upon the lives and characters of those she loves. The few women who have distinguished themselves, give the world assurance that a liberal education will do for them what it has accomplished for men whose genius has made them a world-wide reputation.

Though fragile in form and unphilosophical by nature, she can intuitively penetrate the social mystery, and by reading and reflection, she can form an intellectual system of her own, and clothe her efforts with every womanly instinct that adorns the sex. Let me instance Mrs. Somerville and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Jenny Lind, and that fair historian, Agnes Strickland, and our own countrywomen, Mrs. Hosmer and Elizabeth Thompson.

Mrs. Somerville, who bequeathed a half million dollars for the production of books on science for young people ; Mrs. Browning, who is the queen of poetry ; the Casta Diva and Jenny Lind's charities ; Miss Strickland's Queens of the British Isles ; the Zenobia of Palmyra by Miss Hosmer, and the ceaseless beneficence of Mrs. Thompson, may serve to elucidate the faculties cultivated women possess to adorn the world and establish a fame which on earth we call immortal.

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